

McCracken House  
Near Huntsville, Alabama

Madison Co.

ALA  
HABS No. 28-410

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PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA  
District No. 16

Historic American Buildings Survey  
E. Walter Burkhardt, District Officer  
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Project #<sup>ALA</sup>16-410  
THE McCRACKEN HOME  
Meridian Pike,  
Near Huntsville, Alabama

Page 2.

HABS  
ALA  
45-HUVI.V  
2

### HISTORICAL DATA:

Built: 1843.

#### Ownership:

"The acreage of the plantation first was entered by John Fulton, through a grant from the Government, on March 19, 1810."

Rodah Horton bought the land about 1840. He built his house in 1843.

Frank Mastin owned this home from 1871 to 1881.

Mrs. Mary M. McCracken purchased this home in 1881.

Miss Sara Leech owned this property, after the McCrackens gave it up, until recently, when she lost it on account of a mortgage foreclosure to a Mr. J. C. Smith of Huntsville.

#### Rodah Horton:

Came to Huntsville from Virginia in the late 30's. Married Lucy Otey, daughter of Walter Otey, of Huntsville. He chose the site for his home on a hill overlooking the valley below and the highway to Huntsville.

#### Slave Quarters:

In the basement, Mr. Horton caused to have placed many rooms for his household slaves, also storage rooms and wine cellars.

#### Facade of House:

This house received its beautiful columns as the result of a wager. Mr. Horton and George Steele, the architect, bet on an election. "According to this bet, Horton was to pay Steele \$500 if he lost. On the other hand, if the bet went in favor of the plantation owner, the skilled mason was to build him without charge, a characteristically Southern front for his home. Steele lost, and he constructed the colonnade as he had agreed. The cement covering

Project #<sup>ALA</sup>18-410  
THE McCRACKEN HOME

he used over the brick, it is thought, cannot be duplicated today. The only soars upon the surface of the columns, few in number and widely scattered, are said to have been made by bullets during the Civil War."

Three terraces sloped off toward the south toward a natural lake in a bottom near the road. Driveways led up from the road on both sides of the mansion, forming a circle before several stone steps at the end of a wide walk, bricks for which were made eight inches square. At the side of this stairway stood the customary horse block. A white picket fence enclosed the lawn. The terraces were covered with rose-bushes.

Rondah Horton walked out one morning to find the lake gone. A few days later it was found by a slave in a meadow on the other side of the mansion.

This home was famous in all Alabama, prior to the Civil War, for its magnificent entertainments, for the famous people who gathered in its spacious halls and rooms to partake of the hospitality of the Horton's.

Frank Mastin, the second owner of this plantation mansion, did not occupy the house himself but rented it during the whole ten years of his ownership.

But after Mrs. Mary McCracken bought the place in 1881, again this house became the scene for much old fashioned Southern hospitality.

#### Source of Material:

Historic Homes, by Pat Jones, published in the  
Huntsville Times for November 20, 1932.

*Reviewed 1936 by H.C.F.*

McCRACKEN HOUSE  
Meridian Pike, near Huntsville  
Madison County, Alabama.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION:

The large Doric portico on the McCracken house is a later addition to the slight frame house behind. The unfluted columns are brick covered with stucco. The entablature is built up of lath and plaster and wood mouldings. The main door has side lights and a one pane high square transom. The chimney shown in the photograph is "freestanding".

(Revised and rewritten at  
HABS Headquarters - H.C.F.  
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(~~Original sheet in field notebook~~).